

SOUTH SPA 6
Area Health Office

Chronicle



A publication for friends and neighbors of the South Service Planning Area

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Celebrating Public Health Week

Every year, "Public Health Week" (the first full week of April) is celebrated by public health professionals and community groups across the nation. This year marked the 17th Annual Public Health Week (PHW) in Los Angeles County. According to John F. Schunhoff, Ph.D., Chief of Operations Public Health Division, L.A. County Department of Health Services (LACDHS), "Public Health serves us all by preventing disease and promoting and protecting the health of the community. We turn to medical care when we are ill, but it is through public health efforts that we are protected from disease and injury in the first place. PHW is an opportunity for our communities to understand the fundamental importance and value of public health."

With this in mind, the LACDHS, Public Health, South Service Planning Area (SPA 6) coordinated and held health fairs to inform the community about preventive health matters, with special emphasis on promoting proper physical activity and nutrition.

On April 13th, 2004, Ruth Temple Health Center held a health fair in recognition of PHW. Approximately 400 fourth and fifth grade students and their teachers from Martin Luther King Elementary School happily attended the event, receiving health information, health screenings, incentives, and healthy snacks, all the while moving to music provided by 92.3 The Beat and The Shoe Warehouse. Various organizations helped make the health fair a success, such as the LACDHS, Public Health, Lead Program, Environmental Health Program, Veterinary Program, Child Health and Disability Program, the Toy Loan Department, American Heart Association, the Weingart YMCA, 5-a-day, the California Nutrition Network, and many others.

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Protection From West Nile Virus

West Nile virus (WNV) is a mosquito-borne disease that is common in Africa, west Asia and the Middle East. West Nile virus was first detected in the United States in New York in 1999. Since then, WNV has spread to 46 states, Canada, and Mexico. In 2003, three locally acquired human WNV cases were detected in residents of Los Angeles, Imperial, and Riverside counties, and WNV activity was detected in dead birds, mosquitoes, sentinel chickens, and a horse in six southern California counties. WNV has also been detected in 2004 in southern California.

People usually get WNV from the bite of an infected mosquito. There is also evidence that WNV can be acquired via a blood transfusion or organ transplant from an infected donor.

Most people who are bitten by a mosquito with WNV will not get sick. However, people who do become ill may experience mild to moderate flu-like symptoms like fever, headache and body ache. The elderly and immunocompromised are particularly vulnerable to illness caused by WNV.

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If you have symptoms of WNV, call your doctor.

Residents should follow the recommendations below for keeping mosquitos under control on their personal property:

- Avoid spending time outside at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are active. They are especially active for two hours after sunset.
- When outdoors, wear long pants, long sleeve shirts and other protective clothing.
- Apply insect repellent containing DEET according to label instructions.
- Make sure that doors and windows have tight fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or holes.
- Eliminate all sources of standing water that can support mosquito breeding.

For more information on West Nile virus, visit the Web site : <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/q&a.htm>

State of California Department of Health Services

TUBERCULOSIS CASES IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY FALL BELOW 1,000 FOR FIRST TIME IN HISTORY

Los Angeles County Tuberculosis Control Program

Wednesday, March 24, 2004 marked World Tuberculosis Day. Sponsored each year by the World Health Organization, this day commemorates Dr. Robert Koch's 1882 discovery of the organism that causes TB. Dr. Koch's discovery has led to an understanding of the germ theory and public health measures to control this disease, like the development of effective antibiotics and public health awareness campaigns. Locally, there is good news to report. In 2003, the number of new TB cases reported in Los Angeles County (excluding Long Beach and Pasadena) was 951 (provisional data). This marks the first time the County has reported less than 1,000 cases annually and is a dramatic decline compared to the early 1990's when over 2,000 cases were reported.

Despite this progress, 3 billion people around the world are still infected with the dormant form of TB. Being infected means that a person was exposed to someone who has contagious TB disease. If they have a strong, healthy immune system, the bacteria can remain dormant (or latent) in the person's lungs for the rest of their life and they may not progress to developing TB disease. During this time, they have no symptoms and are not contagious. But a weakened immune system, resulting from medical problems like AIDS, cancer, diabetes, or drug abuse, can cause the bacteria to become active and may produce the contagious form of TB.

Each year, 7 to 8 million new cases of TB disease are diagnosed worldwide and, in turn, 2 to 3 million people die from what is usually a curable disease, owing to factors, such as the unavailability of medicines, drug-resistant forms of TB and/or the disease being too far advanced for available medications to be completely effective.

In the United States, the number of TB cases has dropped steadily since 1992. California, however, continues to report the highest amount of TB with 3,230 new cases in 2003 (provisional data), a 2% increase from 2002 (provisional data). In L.A. County, on the other hand, TB continued to decline steadily for the 12th year in a row, from a high of 2,198 cases in 1992 to 951 cases in 2003.

While there are a relatively small number of TB cases that are diagnosed in the U.S. when compared to the rest of the world, TB is a global epidemic that knows no borders. This is evident when considering in 2003, approximately 51% of all newly diagnosed TB cases in the U.S. occurred among foreign-born individuals. L.A. County, which has a higher rate of immigration than the U.S. average, reported that 78% of new cases occurred among the foreign-born. In fact, since 1998, the highest rates of TB among foreign-born individuals in L.A. County occurred in people who immigrated from Mexico, the Philippines, China, South Korea, and Vietnam. Despite the drop in the number of cases in TB in L.A. County, TB cases are increasing among these five population groups, which, collectively, account for 58% of the 951 cases reported in 2003.

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Celebrating Public Health Week

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On April 15th, 2004, South Health Center held a health fair in recognition of PHW. Over 500 students and their teachers from nearby Kaiser Permanente Learning Center, Markham Junior High, Thomas Riley High School and 96th St. Elementary School enjoyed the day's festivities, as they too moved to music provided by 92.3 The Beat, ate healthy snacks, participated in fun games, and received healthful information and incentives. Many of the organizations that participated at Ruth Temple's Health Fair also helped to make South Health Center's Health Fair a success.

A special thanks goes out to all those, namely health center staff and public health nurses, who volunteered their time in planning and implementing the health fairs. No doubt, your time and effort was well spent, especially considering the overwhelmingly positive feedback received, with a majority of the participants admitting they enjoyed the health fairs and look forward seeing others in the future. Message received loud and clear. We enthusiastically look forward to providing our community with public health events in the future.

Everyone Can Help Prevent Child Abuse

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month

In 2001, almost one million children did not know what it was like to be "safe and sound" in their own homes. Tragically, three children—of all races, genders, and socioeconomic backgrounds—die each day as a result of abuse or neglect.

During April's annual observance of Child Abuse Prevention Month, the Service Planning Area 6 Child Abuse Council and the Westside Child Trauma Council sponsored events, like presentations on mental disabilities and trauma in children and the distribution of free public awareness materials, to call attention to the importance of preventing these tragedies and all forms of child maltreatment, as well as to the role each of us can play in these efforts.

"We need to raise the public's awareness of the devastating effects of child abuse," said Martina Travis, Service Planning Areas 5/6 Acting Area Health Officer, "and empower and encourage people to become involved and support families and parents so that we can prevent all forms of child abuse and neglect from reaching our community's children."

There are also many things that individuals can do—during April and throughout the year—to keep the children in their lives and communities from becoming statistics. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Children's Bureau, Office on Child Abuse and Neglect, working with its National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse Neglect Information, has teamed up with Prevent Child Abuse America to create a packet of information and resources about child abuse and neglect prevention with the theme of "Gateways to Prevention." It contains strategies for how each one of us can get involved in preventing child abuse. The packet is available online at <http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov/topics/prevention>.

Everyone can provide a Gateway to Prevention, and everyone can play a role in preventing child abuse. Raise the issue. Reach out to kids and families in your community. Join community prevention efforts. Take action to help ensure that the children in your community are safe and sound.

For more information about activities relating to Child Abuse Prevention Month or for information about child abuse prevention programs and activities throughout the year, contact the Los Angeles Community Child Abuse Councils (www.lachildabusecouncils.org).

A Safer Valentine's Day

February 14th-21st marked the 22nd Annual National Condom Week, a week highlighting safer sex practices. Though National Condom Week always starts on Valentine's Day, the South Service Planning Area (SPA 6) decided to raise awareness of condom use the week preceding Valentine's Day, February 8th-14th. During this time, the SPA 6 "Special Events Committee" distributed holiday bags filled with condoms and information on how to use condoms effectively at South Health Center and Ruth Temple Health Center. Compared to L.A. County, SPA 6 is home to one of the highest cases of morbidity related to sexually transmitted diseases. To illustrate, the Gonorrhea rate, alone, in SPA 6 is twice as high as the second highest rate in Los Angeles County (240 per 100,000 population versus 109 per 100,000 population). SPA 6 makes every effort to address these and other high rates of preventable diseases.

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Tuberculosis Cases in Los Angeles County Fall Below 1,000 For First Time in History

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When foreign-born individuals first arrive in the U.S., many are not aware that they are infected with TB. In the beginning, they have no symptoms, but can later develop the disease if their immune system weakens. Others arrive and are already sick with active, contagious TB but they don't realize that they have this disease, possibly confusing it with the flu, a cold, or a chronic cough.

Efforts to control TB involve doctors, nurses, public health investigators, health educators, and community outreach workers who are employed by the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services. Collaboratively, they work with a wide range of medical organizations in the public and private sectors and with groups that serve and represent the diversity of immigrant communities within our county. Among the strategies that have contributed to the decline of TB cases in L.A. County have been the use of directly observed therapy (DOT), incentives to encourage adherence to therapy, contact investigation, management of multidrug-resistant TB, surveillance, data collection, and the provision of public and professional education about this disease.

In addition to this collaborative effort, the public still needs to be aware of the continued threat of TB in our communities. The County Health Department asks each person to partner with and support the efforts of the TB Control Program in helping to eliminate this disease. Each Individual must remain alert to the symptoms of TB and should notify his or her physician or health care provider if the following signs and/or symptoms are observed:

1. A cough that continues for three weeks or longer and does not improve	2. Shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, or chest pain
3. General fatigue, weakness, or malaise	4. Coughing up blood
5. Loss of appetite and resulting loss of weight	6. Positive TB skin test
7. Fever, chills, or night sweats	8. Abnormal chest X-ray consistent with TB

For additional information about TB, contact the Health Education Unit of the TB Control Program at (213) 744-6229.

A Safer Valentine's Day (Continued from page 3)

National Condom Week is but one of the many health-related events sponsored and spearheaded by the Special Events Committee in SPA 6.

Kids Kick Butts

March 31, 2004 marked the ninth annual Kick Butts Day (KBD), a campaign celebrating youth leadership and activism for Tobacco Free Kids. According to the Coalition To Reduce Tobacco Availability in L.A. County, addiction to nicotine begins early as about 80% of tobacco users start before the age of 18. The earlier youth start to use tobacco, the more likely they are to become heavily addicted to nicotine. Furthermore, underage smoking is a serious problem in L.A. County. According to a 2001 youth survey, many youth are nicotine dependent. In fact, over 420,000 high school students in our county had smoked cigarettes during the previous 30 days.

Given these troubling facts, this KBD, the South Service Planning Area (SPA 6) joined thousands of kids in every state and around the world in **STANDING OUT...SPEAKING OUT...and SEIZING CONTROL** in the fight against Big Tobacco. In recognition of KBD, SPA 6 held a tobacco prevention presentation at South Health Center that included a lecture, and the distribution of literature, posters and incentives. During the presentation, volunteer youth from the community gave a memorable and stirring performance, speaking out against tobacco while chanting phrases like, "Cigarettes! Cigarettes! NO! NO! NO!...We want to live and GROW! GROW! GROW!" Having youth from the community take an active role against the harmful effects of tobacco proved especially influential among the standing-room-only 75 adults in attendance, so much so, 10 adults decided take the first step to quit, with 2 committing to quit that day.

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Kids Kick Butts (Continued from page 4)

Overall, the South Health Center presentation succeeded in spreading the word and speaking out about the harmful effects of tobacco on children and youth. Given the overwhelming participation at this year's KBD, SPA 6 looks forward to once again creating an environment supportive of protecting our youth from the harm caused by tobacco. For more information on KBD and how you can get involved, visit www.kickbuttsday.org.

Get Moving to Prevent or Control Diabetes

According to a recent public health report, L.A. County has seen nearly a 50% increase in diabetes mortality over the past decade. Higher rates of diabetes among African-Americans and Latinos, (compared to Whites and Asian/Pacific Islanders) and in certain areas of the County (related to the growing epidemic of overweight and obesity and the low levels of physical activity) suggest that there are areas of the County that will bear a disproportionately large burden of illness and death related to diabetes. One of these areas is our very own South Service Planning Area (SPA 6). The percent of adults diagnosed with diabetes (9.2) as well as the diabetes death rate (38.3) in SPA 6 are statistically worse off than the L.A. County averages, 7.2 and 22.9, respectively.

Diabetes is a condition that affects the way the body uses food. Many of the foods we eat are converted into a simple sugar called glucose, which is the basic fuel for most of the cells in your body. People with diabetes have too much sugar in their blood.

The main problem leading to high blood sugar or diabetes mellitus is a decreased level or effectiveness of insulin. Insulin is an important hormone made by the pancreas that helps the blood sugar from food get into your cells for energy production or storage. This process of turning food into energy is crucial, because the body depends on food for every action.

There are three main types of diabetes mellitus: type I; type II; and gestational diabetes. People with type I diabetes make little or no insulin. This form of diabetes may appear abruptly over days or weeks in previously healthy children, teenagers, or in young adults. The most common form of diabetes, type II, can develop at any age—even during childhood. People with type II diabetes are able to produce small amounts of insulin but not enough to prevent high blood sugar. Being overweight and inactive increases the chances of developing type II diabetes. Gestational diabetes affects 2 to 5 percent of all pregnancies and usually appears during the late stages of pregnancy. Although this form of diabetes usually goes away after the baby is born, a woman who has had it is more likely to develop type II diabetes later in life.

Left unchecked diabetes can cause people to experience complications in their feet, eyes, kidneys, arteries and heart. Some of the common signs and symptoms of diabetes are:

Frequent urination	Increased thirst
Increased hunger	Unusual weight loss
Wounds that won't heal	Excessive fatigue

Visit your physician if you or someone you know has any of these signs and symptoms. Thanks to advances in medicine, diabetes can be successfully controlled with a personalized diabetes management plan. Your role is also essential in making diabetes management and prevention successful. Here are some basic steps you can take to prevent diabetes:

1. Eat a balanced and healthy diet
2. Exercise regularly (3-4 times a week for 30 minutes or more each session).
3. Stop smoking

Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook
National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse
Medline Plus

SPA 6 CHRONICLE

Selected Reportable Diseases (Provisional Data)

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Disease	Jan-Mar 04	Jan-Mar 03
AIDS	57	39
Amebiasis	0	0
Campylobacteriosis	0	1
Chlamydial Infections	2261	2308
Encephalitis	0	0
Gonorrhea	689	580
Hepatitis Type A	0	1
Hepatitis Type B	0	2
Hepatitis Type C	0	0
Measles	0	0
Meningitis	4	0
Meningococcal Infections	0	0
Non-gonococcal Urethritis	32	64
Pertussis	2	2
Salmonellosis	8	2
Shigellosis	6	3
Syphilis, primary & secondary	6	9
Syphilis, early latent (<1 yr.)	11	11
Tuberculosis	18	23

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*Data are provisional due to reporting delay.



SOUTH SPA 6 CHRONICLE

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Public Health Mission: To safeguard and improve the health of all Los Angeles County residents.